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We Need a Socialist Revolution

Parliament is in crisis. The corruption and the greed has forced some political commentators to call for a modern Reform Act, similar to the one enacted in 1832. Politicians are seen as remote, self-serving and interested only in themselves. Some critics have even called for a “*revolution*” Hyperbole rules. Fiddling is condemned, but nothing is said about politicians voting for capitalism’s wars and defending the interest and wealth of the capitalist class.

According to the media politicians are now running scared. One MP believed that the electorate would not be satisfied until politicians were hanging from lamp posts. Others are close to suicide. Once political revolution begins, they do not know when it will end and what power politicians will lose. Tory grandees are forced back to their country estates to pay for their own moats and houses for their ducks. Vile politicians like Jackie Smith might end up in court to become a victim of her own legislation by having her DNA placed on a police data base.

Already some Establishment figures like the Archbishop of Canterbury are calling for calm. They see an ugly mood which could threaten the status quo. Other reactionaries are trying to find reassurance in the writings of the past. Some are trying to resurrect the sentiments of the 18th-century Tory, Edmund Burke. Here is Edmund Burke trying to distil a political conservatism into his readers during the French revolution:

We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility.
REVOLUTIONS 1775-1830, ed. M Williams, Penguin, 1971, pp. 108-9

Socialists do not see the necessity for a new reform act. Instead we see the necessity for a Socialist revolution which will sweep away a belief in God; the class power enshrined in Parliament; the legal protection of the means of production; the superstitious ideas of priests and feudal deference to the nobility. As the Beatles sang on revolution “*we all want to change the world*”; and that change has to be conscious, political and Socialist.

And a Socialist revolution will not be prisons and firing squads. It will not mean death and destruction, minds filled with hate, and people carrying pictures of Chairman Mao. It will not mean mobs cheering the drop of the guillotine’s blade, and the posturing of professional revolutionaries telling workers what to think and what to do.

What the working class have is the vote; the vote to change society from capitalism to Socialism. Socialist revolution will be about a class--conscious majority taking political action by using Parliament for revolutionary political ends.

The simplest revolutionary use of the ballot box would be to nominate delegates whose only mandate is to establish Socialism and only Socialism. There would not be a Reform Act like that of 1832 but a Socialist revolution where production for profit will be replaced by production for social use.

The object of Socialism is neither to reform away the corrupt practices of Parliamentarians nor to diffuse political power through proportional representation. The object for a Socialist majority is to use Parliament in a revolutionary way to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. And a Socialist revolution will not be an isolated act. A world working class confronts a world capitalist class and its state. World capitalism has to be replaced by world Socialism. You cannot have Socialism in one country.

Socialists will use Parliament in a revolutionary way by sending Socialist delegates to gain political power, and ensure that the machinery of government is removed from protecting the privilege and power of the capitalist class to exploit and use production for the purpose of making a profit. Socialists are not interested in the role of the Speaker whether he has flunkies carrying his coat tails through Parliament. We are not interested in whether arcane ceremonies take place or not. What we are interested in is that the working class use their vote in their own interests and not waste it by voting into power politicians, either corrupt or paragons of virtue, who will only administer capitalism in the interest of the capitalist class.

Bruce Anderson, a latter-day Edmund Burke, is alarmed at the anger against the institution of Parliament. He invoked the Royalist Lord Falkland who, on the eve of the English Civil War, wrote: “*when it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change*” (INDEPENDENT, 24 May 2009). However it was necessary for revolutionary change in the 17th century, just as it is now in the 21st century. Then it was the necessity for a bourgeois revolution against the feudal Divine Right of Kings. Today it is the necessity for a Socialist revolution against the privilege and power of the capitalist class, protected by Parliament and the capitalist state.

Socialists do not advocate civil war. What we do advocate is the formation of a Socialist majority understanding and agreeing with the case for Socialism. And we recognise that political power resides in Parliament, and that a Socialist majority of delegates must be formed there to gain control of the machinery of Government. A Socialist vote should be used as a revolutionary instrument. Only convinced Socialists should vote for Socialism. Where Socialist candidates are standing as delegates Socialists should use the vote; where there are no Socialist delegates standing, then spoil the ballot paper with the words “*World Socialism: Socialist Party of Great Britain*” or similar written across it. That is the action and language of Socialist revolution.

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The Failure of Labour's Social Reforms

The Labour government has failed to eradicate child poverty even within its own limited definition of poverty. Poverty for Socialists derives from the minority private ownership of the means of production. That said, the number of children living below the breadline remained stuck - at 2.9 million in 2008 - as the government's attempt to reduce poverty came to a grinding halt (all statistics and quotations from THE GUARDIAN, 8 May 2009).

Amid criticism from very naïve campaigners for the lack of progress, ministers admitted that it would now be “*very difficult*” for the government to meet its objective of halving by 2010 the number of children living in households where the income was less than 60% of the national median.

Tony Blair pledged in 1999 that Britain would eradicate child poverty within a generation and set an interim target of halving the total – then 3.4 million – by 2010. It was an empty and undeliverable boast. Poverty cannot be abolished under capitalism. Capitalism causes poverty as a result of production taking place for profit, rather than to meet social need. Poverty is a class issue. And it is political. While the means of production are owned by a small minority to the exclusion of the majority, poverty will persist from one generation of the working class to the next. Poverty only ends with the establishment of Socialism.

Figures released by the Department of Work and Pensions in May 2009 showed that, after dropping by 700,000 over a five year period to 2004-05, the number of children living in poverty had since risen by 200,000. The DWP said that, while the number of children living in poverty in the year to 2007-08 had remained the same, the number of adults slipping below the poverty line had increased by 200,000. Income inequality has widened, the DWP added.

Children's Minister Beverley Hughes said that in the current economic climate, “*meeting the 2010 target is very difficult. It is very difficult to model the impact of the recession on child poverty.*” What she forgot to add to her “*difficulty*” was that the government’s fatuous boast to eradicate child poverty was based on the absurd economic premise held by Gordon Brown that there was going to be no more “*boom and bust*”, and that “*sustainable*” economic growth was going to last for ever.

Capitalism is not kind to politicians who believe they only have to enact the right policy, and a social problem like child poverty will be resolved. There was a trade crisis. There was an economic depression. And the banking system had to be bailed out costing billions of pounds.

High levels of bankruptcy and falls in company profits meant less taxation. The increasing numbers of unemployed workers receiving benefit had to be paid for; and on the same day as Labour’s failure on child poverty was announced, with the mothballing of Corus’s steel production plant, another 1800 jobs were lost. Different government priorities now exist. Consequently, there is not the money around to afford social reform programmes. There never is. Political “*pledges*” remain what they are; empty pledges. Easy to pledge reforms - harder or impossible for politicians to deliver them.

Not that Labour’s reform failures are anything new. In the 1960s, the Labour government, in the face of an economic slump, was forced to bring back and increase prescription charges, abolish free milk in secondary schools, and reduce planned spending on house and school building. In 1977, in the next depression, it was the Labour government which cut back expenditure on education and the National Health Service.

Colette Marshall, UK Director of Save the Children, said:

The government has clearly broken its promise to lift up to 3 million children out of poverty in the UK. It is outrageous that so many children continue to miss out on the basic necessities most children take for granted. Today's figures show that the government will fall well short of its 2010 target to halve the numbers of children living in poverty... In 2001 Gordon Brown referred to child poverty as a 'scar on Britain's soul'. This scar is taking a very long time to heal. (ibid).

Head of Policy for the Child Poverty Action Group, Dr Paul Dornan, said the government's “*failure to make progress*” was, deplorable. He went on to say:

You don't eradicate child poverty by doing nothing, but we've just had a 'do nothing' budget for the poorest children. It was right to give urgent support to jobseekers, but there was little in the budget to build a fairer Britain. The disgraceful decision to give the poorest families less than the cost of a pint of milk for each child to help them survive the recession was a kick in the teeth (ibid).

Yes, governments break promises. Yes, the economic depression is a kick in the teeth for the poor, particular those workers who have to live on the dole. Single workers on the dole get £50.95 a week - they cannot afford the trough of luxury commodities that MPs had their snouts in when taking advantage of the House of Commons ‘claims culture’ for expenses.

But then capitalism is no bed of roses for workers in employment, faced with day-to-day exploitation, cuts in wages and salaries, part-time work and enforced ‘holidays’. What do the charities expect under capitalism? And do not forget that charities are part and parcel of the problem. They believe that governments can eradicate poverty.

They believe in the impossible; that capitalism can be reformed by enlightened politicians to meet the need of all society.

It can't. It does not exist for that purpose. The priority of capitalist governments, including this Labour one, is to look after the interests of the capitalist class. In order to finance its social reform measures, the Labour Government levied wide ranging taxes on the propertied class in an attempt to equalise incomes. Developers, for example, not only had to release some of their housing into the social housing sector but had to pay another tax for the cost of the services impinging on local authority services.

Yet the official statistics now show that despite Labour's creative taxation the distribution of incomes and wealth remains as it must under capitalism: concentrated in the hands of the few. The capitalists remain rich through their monopoly of the means of production and the unearned income they receive in the form of rent, interest and profit. Workers still only get in wages and salaries sufficient to keep them as an exploited and wealth-producing class. Well-paid workers are not immune from redundancy and losing their jobs. State reforms and 'tax credits' for the poor, cannot remove the inequalities of capitalism, any more than they can solve the problem of child poverty. As Socialists have shown time and time again, social reforms cannot resolve the problems facing the working class only the establishment of Socialism.

The failure of the Labour government to make any appreciable difference to the condition of the working class under capitalism bears eloquent testimony to the soundness of the Socialist case against capitalism. So long as capitalism is accepted by the workers as a necessity, it must be run in the interests of the capitalist class, not the workers. And the consequence for the working class is that they will remain exploited, poor and subject to the social consequences of commodity production and exchange for profit. As the Socialist Party of Great Britain stated during the trade depression of the 1970s:

The Socialist party will not barter its independence for promises of reform. For no matter whether these promises are made sincerely or not, we know that the immediate need of the working class is freedom from exploitation which can only be achieved through the establishment of Socialism.

The Futility of Reformism, QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1978, p 33

The poverty of the working class, whether their wages are high or low, derives from their class position and the fact that they do not own the means of production.

If workers want to see the end of poverty, one of the first steps is not to vote for capitalist political parties like the Labour Party.

The next step is to become socialists and organise with other like-minded workers to consciously and politically abolish the profit system, and replace it with common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

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Darwin, Morgan and Marxism (Part 2)

The first part of this article was about Lewis H Morgan's pioneering study of prehistoric social evolution as set out in his book, ANCIENT SOCIETY (1877), together with Marx's materialist conception of history. Marx had much in common with both Darwin and Lewis Morgan. Darwin too was interested in history, in a broad sense - particularly natural history, and the origins of humanity and other species.

Today Darwin is celebrated, as he was in his own lifetime. Darwin's theory of evolution has been immensely fruitful in many fields of science, opening up many lines of research, so that even now scientists are still working on questions he raised. It is hugely influential, although still controversial and even unacceptable to some. Marx by contrast is notorious rather than famous, and his ideas are often distorted. Even in his own lifetime, he was almost unknown: Sir John Macdonnell wrote in the *Fortnightly Review* (1875):

Though Marx has lived much in England, he is here almost the shadow of a name. People may do him the honour of abusing him, but read him they do not.
Francis Wheen, KARL MARX, p 369

Darwin's achievement as a scientist was not only to come up with a theory of evolution based on *natural* selection, but also to provide strong evidence to support this theory. He showed that all forms of life – from bugs and bats to beetles and birds, from flowers to fish, from turtles to trees: they all follow similar general laws of development.

He showed that all living beings – animal and vegetable alike – are descended from a long line of ancestors. For *all* living species, if you follow their pedigrees back far enough, you will find a common shared ancestor. This meant that all forms of life probably had a single common origin – Darwin suggested this as a possibility but could not then prove it.

His theory about the evolution of new species coming about by means of 'Natural Selection' was one which developed step by step. When he looked at the breeding of domesticated species, he found that:

... selection was the keystone of man's success. But how selection could be applied to organisms living in a state of nature was a mystery to me.

After the Beagle voyage, in 1838, when he read Malthus's book, he became convinced of the importance of population pressures and the 'struggle for existence', and concluded that, as so many of the young could not survive and reproduce:

... favourable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavourable ones to be destroyed. The result of this would be the formation of new species.

Lyell's PRINCIPLES OF GEOLOGY also influenced him, making him conscious of the huge antiquity of the planet, in contrast to the Bible account.

In 1858 Alfred Russell Wallace, a plant-collector, wrote to him from South East Asia, sending him his own manuscript about evolution, and asking Darwin to forward this to Lyell. Darwin was then still only partly through drafting his book, painstakingly assembling the evidence for his theory, but he recognised in Wallace's work the same theory as his own. In 1858 Wallace's essay and a summary by Darwin were both read to the Linnean Society, and in 1859, Darwin's book, THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION, was published, all 1,000 copies being sold out on the day of publication. Several later editions appeared: the 6th and last was published in 1872, just 10 years before Darwin's death.

A Question of Coincidence?

Both Darwin and Wallace had come up with the same theory at the same time. But Darwin had only discussed his theory with a few trusted friends and they moved in different circles. Darwin was a High Establishment figure, with family money and influence, but Wallace had to earn his living.

There are three possible ways of dealing with this 'coincidence': First, it's just a coincidence, impossible to explain. Or it may be that there was some indirect way by which Darwin's line of thinking might have become known. But there is another explanation - one which is consistent with Marx's theory of history.

Assuming there was no direct personal connection between Darwin and Wallace, it is only from the circumstance that they both lived in the same period, were fascinated by science, and were exposed to the immensely varied forms of flora and fauna that they found especially in the tropics: it is from these facts that an explanation has to come. Also, in ANTI-DUHRING (chap. 7), Engels wrote that, since Lamarck's time, two new sciences, embryology and palaeontology, had arisen, and these gave the new theory of evolution "*its most secure base*".

Marx and Engels were excited to learn that Darwin and Wallace had separately and independently come up with the

same new theory: this confirmed their theory. Engels later wrote (letter to Starkenburg, 1894) that the fact that similar theories of history were independently discovered by Marx, by Morgan in the US, and by several French and English historians: this fact by itself meant that “*the time was ripe for it and that indeed it **had** to be discovered*”.

Science or Religion?

Science is always, and can only be, work in progress. While certain facts are constants, e.g. the speed of light, theoretical interpretations can be supplanted.

Scientists always know that, whatever their findings, these can only be provisional, lasting only until some new work comes along, and then yesterday’s discovery is discarded. To give just one example: biologists today rely on the use of the electron microscope which was not available to Darwin and his contemporaries. But a modern work, Richard Fortey’s book, *LIFE - AN UNAUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY* (1997), used an image magnified 10,000 times. In biology as in astronomy, we can see more with better equipment. Consequently, science is forever developing and cannot become dogma, which is how it differs from religion: while religion relies on belief and faith, science is rooted in evidence, observation and reason.

In the last chapter of *THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION* (6th edition), Darwin dealt with some arguments used against the ‘Natural Selection’ theory. Even now, some of these objections are still being used as supposedly clinching arguments especially by Creationists and the Intelligent Design people, e.g. citing the sketchy geological and fossil records, and the supposed lack of “intermediate links”. Darwin’s answer stressed the relative ignorance we have of Earth’s past:

It cannot be denied that we are as yet very ignorant as to the full extent of the various climatal and geographical changes which have affected the earth during modern periods, and such changes will often have facilitated migration. (p 387)

Another question was why was it that some “*whole groups of allied species appear, though this appearance is often false, to have come in suddenly on the successive geological stages*”. Darwin’s answer was typical of him:

I can answer these questions and objections only on the supposition that the geological record is far more imperfect than most geologists believe. The number of fossils in all our museums is absolutely as nothing compared with the countless generations of countless species which have certainly existed (p 388).

Darwin was again right. In our own times, there have been and continue to be a huge number of very significant fossil finds, especially in China, Africa, South America, and even in the Antarctic. Also, discoveries in genetics and DNA mean that modern scientists can now trace records of ancient migrations, which constantly open up new insights into the relationships of different species. In the future, with more finds, more gaps in the record will be filled in but science never reaches a final destination.

Earth

It is important to recall that Darwin had done some geological fieldwork before the Beagle voyage, and it was this geological perspective that helped him to appreciate the immense antiquity of earth. In 1868, T H Huxley did a lecture in Norwich on *A PIECE OF CHALK* when he argued that chalk was a pointer to the real geological age of the earth’s surface.

Chalk is simply the calcified remains of vast quantities of the tiniest of sea-creatures, generations of them piled up on top of each another, millimetre by millimetre. As Huxley told his audience in Norwich:

The area on which we stand has been first sea and then land, for at least 4 alterations, and has remained in each of these conditions for a period of great length... During the chalk period or cretaceous epoch, not one of the present great physical features of the globe was in existence. Our great mountain ranges, Pyrenees, Alps, Himalayas, Andes,

have all been upheaved since the chalk was deposited.
THE FABER BOOK OF SCIENCE, pp 143, 145

How long must it take for such vast embankments of chalk to accumulate? Obviously far longer than Bishop Ussher's calculation, based on the Bible.

Darwin pointed out that the surface of the earth would have changed in the past, which has been confirmed by later theories of continental drift and tectonic plates. Against the view of the religious consensus, Darwin argued:

With respect to the lapse of time not having been sufficient since our planet was consolidated for the assumed amount of organic change... I can only say, firstly, that we do not know at what rate species change as measured by years, and secondly, that many philosophers are not as yet willing to admit that we know enough of the constitution of the universe and of the interior of our globe to speculate with safety on its past duration (p 389).

He then added that:

... it deserves especial notice that the more important objections relate to questions on which we are confessedly ignorant; nor do we know how ignorant we are... it cannot be pretended... that we know how imperfect is the Geological Record (p 390).

“*Nor do we know how ignorant we are*” is a serious point. Science, we repeat, can only be work in progress, a voyage of discovery.

Today Darwin's explanation of evolution of new species by means of 'natural selection' is well established. And yet it is still dogmatically rejected by those for whom the Bible's account of the creation myth is the final word, the 'word of god' which it would be blasphemy to challenge.

There was the Monkey Trial in USA, and even now there is an insistence that Darwin's theory is “*only a 'theory'* ”, so that, if evolution was to be taught in American schools, this has to be countered by teachings based on Intelligent Design. There are even Creationists running schools and teaching science in Britain, now, 150 years after Darwin's book was published. Some religious parents have even taken their children out of state schools so as to teach them at home, ignorant of evolution. As for the world of Islam, Darwinism cannot be taught in Islamic countries, as it is contrary to the Koran.

Darwin answered such religious objections firmly, e.g.:

It is so easy to hide our ignorance under such expressions as the 'plan of creation', 'unity of design', etc., and to think that we give an explanation when we only re-state a fact (p 402).

To this day, Creationists, the so-called Intelligent Design school and the like, are still ignorantly just “*re-stating facts*”, as they fight to defend the accounts of 'creation' in Genesis from the dreadful dangers of Darwinism.

Though Darwin himself was no revolutionary, his theory has revolutionary implications. For instance, among his conclusions (chapter 15), he wrote:-

I believe that animals are descended from at most only 4 or 5 progenitors, and plants from an equal number. Analogy would lead me one step further: namely, to the belief that all animals and plants are descended from some one prototype.

Although he noted that “*analogy may be a deceitful guide*”, he argued that: *... all living things have much in common, in their chemical composition, their cellular structure, their laws of growth, and their liability to injurious influences*

It followed that, to Darwin, there is no hard and fast dividing line between the origins of plant life and animal life, and he speculated that:

... on the principle of natural selection with divergence of character, it does not seem incredible that, from some such low and intermediate form [e.g. algae], both animals and plants may have been developed; and, if we admit this, we must likewise admit that all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth may be descended from one primordial form.

This was indeed radical. In the well-known debate at Oxford, Bishop Sam Wilberforce sneered at the idea that humans are descended from apes. But what would he have said of Darwin's view that all forms of Earth's *flora* and *fauna*, past and present, are derived from a single common ancestry?

It follows from Darwin's theory that the old dualist, religious belief that, unlike plants and animals, each human body houses an 'immortal soul': this belief has to be discarded as one for which there is and can be no evidence.

Some Dangers of Bad Science

However some other lines of thinking about evolution were and are simply bad science - dangerous and incredibly harmful. In 1809 Lamarck had asserted that evolution happened through the inheritance of 'acquired characteristics'.. But, though scientists rejected Lamarck's view, that did not stop G B Shaw - no scientist but opposed to both Marx and Darwin - from adopting Lamarckism, e.g. in the *Preface* to his 1921 play, BACK TO METHUSELAH (quoted in the FABER BOOK OF SCIENCE, pp 60-63).

According to Shaw, if we want to be able to fly like eagles, or live underwater like fish, all we need to do is use our willpower but there is no record that Shaw ever succeeded in evolving into a superman by this simple method.

Another follower of Lamarck was the 20th century Russian agronomist, Lysenko. Like Shaw, Stalin was a great believer in willpower, and Lysenko claimed that he could develop crops able to flourish in the Arctic tundra. He claimed he would get corn to ripen, even there, but nothing came of his expensive experiments. Much later, at the time of China's Great Leap Forward, Lysenkoism was adopted by Mao Tse-Tung, another believer in willpower and 'acquired characteristics'. But his vast Chinese experiment caused the world's worst ever famine, killing millions by starvation.

Then there was the pseudo-science of 'eugenics' which was derived from Darwin's theory as set out by his cousin, Francis Galton, supported for instance by T H Huxley's son, Leonard Huxley, and by his son Julian Huxley, the zoologist. By the 1920s, eugenics was seen as scientific, ergo progressive; e.g. Leonard Huxley argued in a lecture at Conway Hall :

We look on complacently while the feeble-minded multiply – and multiply without self-control far faster than the general average... We educate them, knowing that, though they may rise a little in the scale, they will never reach the average; and finally release them from adolescent restrictions to enjoy the forms of adult independence, free to breed their like superabundantly, to bring down the general level of intelligence and character, and to be a life-long and growing burden on the rest of society.

PROGRESS AND THE UNFIT, 1926, pp 30-31

That was the sort of twisted logic that later led to the Nazi policy: ruthless elimination of any that were thought physically, mentally or racially 'unfit'!

There was also 'Social Darwinism', a late 19th century, imperialist and racist ideology, e.g. Ernst Haeckel in 1883 (tr. by Edward Aveling):

That immense superiority which the white race has won over the other races in the struggle for existence is due to Natural Selection, the key to all advance in culture, to all so-called history... That superiority will, without doubt, become more and more marked in the future , so that still fewer races of man will be able, as time advances, to contend with the white in the struggle for existence...

See ALAS, POOR DARWIN, ed. Hilary Rose and Steven Rose, 2000, p 206

A belief in ‘white supremacy’ is still held by various racist and nationalist groups, and South Africa has only recently got rid of its racist apartheid regime. ‘Social Darwinism’ was also the creed of John D Rockefeller (1902): “*The growth of a large business is merely a survival of the fittest*” (XFORD DICTIONARY OF MODERN QUOTATIONS). To such a capitalist, any businesses which went under, as he and his like built their business empires, simply deserved to be go down as simply not ‘fit’ enough.

To Rockefeller, Darwin’s description of how nature gets rid of so many, allowing the survival only of the ‘fittest’ individuals, provided a convenient justification for ruthless commercial competition. For a modern parallel, think Richard Branson *versus* British Airways, or Bill Gates *versus* Google.

But one cannot transfer Darwin’s theory of evolution by ‘natural selection’ to features of human societies. As Harry Morrison (‘Harmo’), an American Socialist, wrote:

... one hears from time to time that Darwinism provides a logical explanation for individual prowess in the field of financial manipulation. It is the “fittest” who survive in the no-holds barred struggle in the markets. [But] Darwinism has nothing to do with democracy, aristocracy, socialism, or any other sort of civil social system. The theory of natural selection, no doubt, was somewhat applicable to primitive man but once he got himself organized into civilized societies (chattel slavery, serfdom, capitalism) his survival depended more upon man-made factors than natural ones... As Darwin also pointed out, man has always been a social animal with the propensity to give mutual aid.

THE SOCIALISM OF BERNARD SHAW, 1989, p 128

A modified version of that early biological determinism came in a more modern theory, ‘sociobiology’, put forward in 1975 by Edward O Wilson. Now, a similar biological determinism is being peddled as ‘*Evolutionary Psychology*’. Again we are being required to believe that our behaviour is determined by caveman instincts, rather than being influenced by social and economic conditions.

Like Lewis H Morgan in America and Marx in Britain, Darwin had a different view: he saw humans as *social* beings, interdependent:

The small strength and speed of man, his want of natural weapons, etc are more than counterbalanced, firstly, by his intellectual powers, through which he has formed for himself weapons, tools etc, though still remaining in a barbarous state, and, secondly, by his social qualities which lead him to give and receive aid from his fellow-men.

THE DESCENT OF MAN, 1871, Chapter. 11 – see H Morrison, op. cit., pp 128-9

In conclusion, some key lessons can be learnt from all these men, Darwin, Lewis H Morgan, and Marx: First, from Darwin and later scientists, that since all humans and other animals have evolved from a single origin, there is no scientific basis for any belief in racial superiority. From Morgan, that as our social relationships have evolved from earlier, democratic, cooperative, societies, they will continue changing as we go forward into the future, and that property concerns are not the be-all and end-all of human existence: “*a mere property career is not the final destiny of mankind*”. And, from Marx and Engels, that the future belongs, not to class-divided, competitive capitalism, but to cooperative Socialism.

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There Is No Right To Work

In May this year, thousands of workers from across Britain took part in a protest march in Birmingham to call on the government to help the UK's manufacturing industry. The march was naïve and silly, and showed no understanding of capitalism and the severe limitations imposed on the government to intervene in the economy.

The manufacturing industry in fact belongs to the capitalist class, not to the workers taking part in the demonstration.

Workers own nothing but their ability to work which they are forced to sell for a wage and salary. In the process of commodity production, they produce more social wealth than they receive in wages. The surplus value goes to the owners of the manufacturing industry once the commodities are sold on the market as the unearned income of profit.

The 'March for Jobs' followed a week which saw thousands of workers lose jobs, with BT and Legal & General announcing cuts of 15,000 and 2,000 workers respectively, and official figures showing a 244,000 increase in unemployment to 2.2 million - the highest increase since the 1980s. Manufacturing has been one of the worst affected sectors in the economy, with redundancies more than doubling in the first three months of 2009 to 67,000, up from 29,000 in January-March 2008.

The demonstration was followed by a rally in the city, which was chosen as a venue because almost one in ten people in the West Midlands are now unemployed. Lord Jones, the former head of the CBI, the employers' group, took part in the march and backed short-term aid for firms. Again, what were trade unionists doing holding a shared platform with known defenders of the capitalist class, people like Lord Jones, who in the past were hostile to workers struggling for higher wages and better working conditions?

Lord Jones joined motor and steel industry workers whose jobs are under threat. They included employees of Vauxhall and Jaguar Land Rover, which has plants in Gaydon in Warwickshire, Castle Bromwich, Coventry, Solihull in the West Midlands and Halewood in Merseyside. Workers from Corus-owned Teesside Cast Products in Redcar, where up to 2,000 jobs are under threat, were also on the march. Rather than understand and do something politically about their class position, these workers inanely believed they had a right to work and to have their jobs protected by the government.

Unite, one of the unions which organised the demonstration, wanted the government to agree to measures ranging from short-time working subsidies, to keep people in work, to more state aid for firms.

Tony Woodley, joint leader of Unite, told the rally at the end of the march that the union's mission was "to get ministers to wake up and act to halt the jobs crisis". He went on to say:

Our message today is it's no good bailing out the banks if you are not looking after the workers, their jobs and their homes... It's not banks we should be looking after, it's workers. We cannot risk seeing another forgotten generation of young people who cannot find work and have their lives ruined as a result.

BBC NEWS, 16 May 2009

Mr Woodley told the rally in Centenary Square that banks which had been saved by public money must free up funding for short-term subsidies, to allow firms to keep open plants until the economy recovers. He concluded his speech by stating:

We need factories and plants open for when recovery comes because if they go they will be gone forever.

Woodley's speech was little more than ignorant rhetoric. He should have read Marx's writings on capitalism, and other Socialist literature, to understand why workers are made unemployed, who the government works for, and why the profit system can never be reformed in the interests of the working class. Banks only lend money if there is a profit to be made. They are not charities. They are not in the business of subsidising unprofitable businesses to save jobs.

And governments, whether Labour or Tory, are not there to look after the interests of workers, their jobs and their homes. They are in existence to pursue the interest of the capitalist class. That is why Northern Rock was nationalised and the government pumped in billions of pounds into the banking system; not for the benefit of workers but for the interest of the capitalist class as a whole.

Governments only support certain industries in the form of subsidies, tax breaks and other kinds of assistance if it is in the interest of a particular industrial sector of the economy or of the country as a whole. In some circumstances it does mean subsidising unprofitable companies either directly through nationalisation or by financial assistance. It has nothing to do with the interest of workers.

Yet governments know that in the real world profitable firms should be allowed to prosper and unsuccessful ones allowed to fail, despite the problems associated with unemployment. Many trade unions, and non-socialist workers, generally forget that capitalism is a social system they have no interest in. It is based on the private ownership of the means of production and class exploitation. If workers do not like capitalism, then good, change it. Become Socialists.

And Government ministers cannot halt the jobs crisis any more than King Canute could order back the tide. Capitalist crises and trade depressions are perfectly normal, as are bankruptcies and high periods of unemployment.

The laws of capitalist production dictate periodic periods of good trade, crisis, depression, and up-turn. Capitalism is not harmonious but anarchic and destructive.

Woodley is a supporter of Keynes, as are most trade union leaders. He believes that capitalism can be managed by professional economists from government departments.

Under capitalism the profit motive is king; profit decides what is produced and when. And the profit-system passes through the trade cycle of boom and slump as surely as night follows day. And the experts and politicians have been unable to do anything about this depression as they were about previous trade depressions. In fact, far from politicians like Gordon Brown, economists like Ed Balls and bankers like Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, controlling capitalism, it is the other way round.

Note how quickly Brown blamed the current depression on world events. And it is true. Politicians do not cause economic crises. But with this truth comes the reality that all capitalist politicians are at the mercy of the violent contradictions which manifest themselves on the world market, and in particular from the anarchy of commodity production and exchange for profit. Given the current contraction of the world market, the previous claims made by Brown to be able to control capitalism, especially its boom-slump cycle, becomes self-evidently wrong.

Nor have politicians and economists been able to do anything to end unemployment. Throughout the world market unemployment is widespread; some 20 million in the EC alone. For Marx the unemployed are an “*industrial reserve army*” which rises in a trade depression and falls in a boom. The industrial reserve army is drawn upon by industries when they require more labour to exploit. And the working class is only employed when it is profitable to do so. Under capitalism, there can never be a right to work.

Rather than waste their time on a “*March for Jobs*”; workers should consciously and politically organise to abolish capitalism and replace the profit system with Socialism. The Marxian alternative - to Keynes, monetarism, economic liberalism and the state capitalism proposed by the SWP and other similar capitalist organisations - is Socialism, a non-market, non-monetary society, based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

Only with the establishment of Socialism, can production be democratically planned to provide what human beings need, both as individuals and as a community.

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Trade Unions, The Class Struggle and Socialism

The Socialist Party of Great Britain and trade unions have a common origin in the class struggle. An understanding of both the function of a Socialist Party and trade unions in the class struggle is important to ensure that workers, in and out of trade unions, steer clear of the Labour Party and do not vote for this particularly vile political organisation, which has supported war, torture, and attacks against the working class since first taking power in 1924.

The SPGB is a political party without leaders, made up of members of the working class. The Party enters into the

field of politics in order to further the class struggle where it matters: over the question of the ownership of the means of production. The means of production are protected by the machinery of government through capitalist political parties in Parliament. Parliament has to be used by a socialist majority for revolutionary ends - to ensure the machinery of government cannot be used to prevent the orderly transformation of capitalism to Socialism.

The growth of the Party reflects the determination of the working class to want to abolish capitalism, and establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society. At the moment, Socialists are few and far between. Nevertheless, only Socialism can ensure production will be used to meet human needs and that a harmony of interests will exist within society.

The class struggle did not begin with the establishment of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Conscious and political recognition of the class struggle took time. A Socialist response to capitalism as a class-divided social system based on private property ownership only became a serious proposition in the 19th century first, with the formation of groups like the Chartists, and then the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League. There were many set-backs notably around the question of reforms and leadership. It was not until 1904, with the formation of the SPGB, that a Socialist party existed with Socialism and only Socialism as its object.

Before there was a political awareness of capitalism and why the class struggle takes place around the ownership and use of the means of production, workers were involved in the day-to-day class struggle over the intensity and extent of exploitation. The class struggle in economic terms over exploitation, wages and better working conditions was reflected in strikes, lock-outs, machine-breaking and penal legislation.

Long before Marx and Engels published THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in 1848, workers were forced into a struggle with the capitalist class.

Through experience the workers learnt that combination into trade unions in similar or allied occupations, despite their initial illegality, could force wage increases from the employers, under favourable trade conditions. The agricultural labourers in Tolpuddle, Dorset, for example, were prepared to face imprisonment and deportation to organise against their employers.

What helped the working class in their struggle with employers for better wages or working conditions was their trade union solidarity and the use of the strike. Workers have to sell their ability to work for a wage or a salary. Employers want to pay workers the least amount they can get away with, so for workers to withhold their labour power within a trade union, can afford some protection from the encroachment of capital. As Marx argued in his pamphlet, VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT, if workers did not use the strike and did not form themselves into trade unions, they would become quite incapable of “*initiating any large movement*”,

Unfortunately, the “*large movement*” the trade unions helped to initiate was the formation and development of the anti-working class Labour Party. From 1906 onwards many trade unions have had formal links with the Labour Party, giving it financial support, and in some cases offering trade union leaders to stand as MPs for Parliament.

The current relationship between trade unions and the Labour Party is wholly unhealthy and keeps the working class back from establishing Socialism, through confusing their own class interest with those of the capitalists and its political parties.

Many trade unionists believe that by trade unions setting up the Labour Party this gave a political voice for the working class in Parliament. Such a sentiment is naïve and wrong. The Labour Party when in government cannot give “*a voice*” to the working class. Labour governments have to administer to the daily problems of capitalism in the interest of the capitalist class.

Labour Governments are part of what Marx called “*the executive of the bourgeoisie*”. Consequently that means supporting the capitalists against the workers. This has meant Labour governments using troops to break strikes, imposing pay restraints, breaking promises, supporting anti-trade union legislation (none of the Tory anti-trade union laws of the 1980s have been repealed), and holding a general hostility to trade union organisation when in government, particularly over struggles for higher pay.

In his book TROOPS IN STRIKES (1984), S Peak showed that the capitalist state used troops against striking workers 36 times up until the miners' strike in 1984. In that time, the Labour government used troops more times against strikers than the Tories did.

Continuing this anti-trade union tradition, the Blair Labour government used troops to break the Firemen's strikes in 2002. The trade union link with the Labour Party only benefits the capitalist class.

The link between trade unions and the Labour Party can never ensure that the working class "*has a voice*" in the policies of the Labour Party because the policies of the Labour Party reflect the priorities of British capitalism. Quite clearly the link between the Labour Party and the unions distracts attention from the principal purpose of trade unions: to resist the pressure of the capitalist class on workers' pay and conditions of employment.

The effectiveness of trade union action has clearly been blunted by support given to the Labour Party. The experience of all Labour governments since the Second World War has shown, far from using political power to force employers to cede wage increases, Labour governments have used political power to try to bring about pay restraint: first attempted by the Wilson government in 1966 with a series of Prices and Incomes Acts, and then by the Callaghan government with his 'social contract' which in effect reduced the value of real wages in a period of rising inflation.

By the 1990s the Labour Party under Blair was claiming the class struggle was over, and forcing onto the trade unions a 'Social Partnership' – a pernicious form of class compromise. The trade union leadership promoted 'partnership' with the employers and their state at every level. They were reluctant to use the strike weapon for better pay and working conditions, but still continued to bankroll the Labour Party.

Under 'Social Partnership' unions lost members and failed to recruit new ones. What was the point of joining a trade union organisation that insisted it had no interests separate from those of the capitalists? You cannot have a partnership between capital and labour. Not only does the capitalist class own the means of production, which they use to make a profit, but they also employ and exploit the working class, forcing workers to produce more social wealth than they receive back in wages and salaries. This '*surplus value*' as Marx called it, goes to the capitalists as unearned income in the form of rent, interest and profit.

What, then, is to be the future of the trade unions? At the present, they have a link with the Labour Party which should be broken. Trade unions also have the unfortunate habit of supporting the sectional interests of the capitalist class where they impinge on particular unions. Trade unions unquestionably pursue the British national interest. They hold onto economic ideas which derive from the capitalist class, notably about the origin of profit and the need for employers. And they call for "*British jobs for British workers*", which is class-divisive and plays into the hands of racists like the British National Party.

Nonetheless, trade unions are a necessity in the class struggle under capitalism. If they were not linked to capitalist political parties, they have the potential to do so much more: they could be valuable centres for spreading Marx's ideas to the workers - principally that reforms cannot end exploitation, unemployment and poverty; fostering internationalism with trade unions and workers all over the world, becoming models of democratic practices with no need for leaders, and advocating the development of a Socialist party to push the political class struggle to its final limit.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, while recommending trade unionists to offer their utmost resistance to the worsening of conditions, never fails to point out that capitalism can never be reformed to meet the needs of all society, and that trade unions can only ever be defensive organisations always affected by the vagaries of the trade cycle.

Socialists remind trade unions of a point Marx made in VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT, some 170 years ago:

At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they

are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, A fair day's wage for a fair day's work! They ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, Abolition of the wages system!

WORKING CLASS

760% is the increase in the number of architects claiming jobseekers allowance since February 2008 (INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY, 31 May 2009). Many of those architects no doubt thought they were not members of the working class. Capitalism with its economic crises pricks such erroneous pretensions. The architect Le Corbusier once said "Architecture or Revolution?" Clearly for a profit system only favouring the rich and privileged, it has to be revolution.

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Pakistan: Crucible of Terror

On a recent visit to Pakistan, Gordon Brown was taken by helicopter over the border region with Pakistan and Afghanistan. He told journalists: "*There is a crucible of terrorism in the mountainous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan*" (CNN, 27 April 2009).

However, Mr Brown did not explain why this "*crucible of terror*" existed or what role was played by his and other Western governments' in its creation. And the terrorism has not stopped. President Obama, following his predecessor's policy, has continued to order rocket attacks from Afghanistan into the border villages - killing more women and children than the Taliban and other assorted terrorists.

It is an inhospitable place. Why the interest? It is costing the US government \$100m a day (INDEPENDENT, 1 May 2009). As early as September 2000, we were told:

Afghanistan's significance from an energy standpoint stems from its geographic position as a potential transit route for oil and natural gas exports from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea, this potential includes proposed multi-billion dollar oil and gas export lines through Afghanistan.

US Government Energy Information fact sheet, September 2000, from HOW OIL INTERESTS PLAY OUT, 2009, www.moles.org

Politicians do not explain their real intent. They present an iceberg politics, with an icy and slippery tip above the water line while unpleasant truths are hidden from view in the murky depths below. But the truth does come out - usually in obscure technical journals and foreign policy reports written by think tanks for government ministers. Here is the oil specialist James Dorian:

... those who control the oil routes out of Central Asia will impact all future direction and quantities of flow and the distribution of revenues from new production.

Oil and gas journal, 10 September 2001

That was a statement as true now as it was then.

With an understanding of capitalism as a violent and competitive system of conflicting national rivalries, Socialists are more interested in what politicians do not say than in what they do say, to justify foreign policy and conflict. War is never about "*democracy*" and "*freedom*". Nor is the terror inflicted by the US and its allies in the mountainous border region primarily to prevent terrorism occurring in London or New York - as Brown stated at his press

conference.

Instead, it is the outcome of a ruthless grab for raw resources on the one hand and an attempt to stabilise current and future energy supply routes on the other. And for the US and its coalition partners it is not going well.

The US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, carried out to secure American domination of Central Asia, home to some of the richest oil and natural gas reserves in the world, has vastly de-stabilised the region and increased tensions between the US and rival powers, particularly Russia and China. The United States would like to monopolise oil from Central Asia, so as to reduce its dependency on oil from the Persian/Arabian Gulf states which it cannot control.

After more than seven years of military violence and repression, the strength of the Taliban and Al Qa'ida opposition to the US occupation and Washington's puppet government in Kabul has grown, to the point where the Taliban, which was ousted from power by the US intervention in October 2001, controls large parts of Afghanistan. They have now become a serious obstacle to trade routes and energy supply lines. President Obama has been forced to throw in another 80,000 troops to solve the problem of security with the potential for creating his own "little Vietnam". Like Bush and Blair before him, Obama will not have to do the killing or run the risk of being killed.

The security situation in Pakistan is likewise deteriorating. Islamist terrorists control large parts of the northwest tribal districts, and tension between the US and Islamabad has mounted over the failure of the Pakistani military to destroy the Taliban. To all intents and purposes, Pakistan is on the verge of civil war.

One area that has come under Taliban control is the Swat Valley, once the home of a ski resort that attracted foreign tourists. In 2007 the Taliban launched an offensive, and has since taken control of the region, which is part of Malakand in the North West Frontier Province.

Following a failed military operation by the Pakistan army in Swat, the regional government, with the support of President Zardari, announced that it was suspending military operations and conceding to the main demand of the Taliban in Swat: i.e. that Malakand come under Islamic or Sharia, law, a feudal mixture of violent misogyny and misanthropy. Women are beaten for infringement of dress codes, barbers killed for shaving beards, 'adulterers' shot, and children blinded for wanting to be educated.

The media attempt to present the war on terror as a conflict between "two civilisations", between the feudal savagery of the Taliban against the democratic enlightenment of the US and its allies, is a deceit. It has all to do with grabbing raw resources and protecting national interests.

In 2004 a conference was held in Islamabad under the heading *Are Regional Gas Pipelines Possible?* One delegate, Dr N Hamid gave a paper in which he analysed the risks for the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline (TAP). He set out the risks. The most serious risk was one of security.

He said:

"The concerned governments will have to ensure the smooth running of the pipeline and its protection from unlawful elements" (www.adb.org).

So the conflict is over gas and oil routes and their "protection from unlawful elements". This was made evident seven years ago, in a report of a meeting between Mr Karzai, President of Afghanistan and the President of Pakistan, General Musharraf. One newspaper reporting the meeting wrote:

Mr Karzai, who arrived in Islamabad earlier yesterday for a one-day visit, said he and Gen Musharraf discussed the proposed Central Asian gas pipeline project 'and agreed that it was in the interest of both countries'. Pakistan and several multinational companies, including the California-based Unocal Corp and Bidas S.A. of Argentina, have been toying with the idea of constructing a 1,600-km pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to growing natural gas markets in Pakistan and, potentially, India. But the project has failed to materialise because of the civil war in Afghanistan and the reluctance of the financial institutions to finance it.

There are three interrelated causes for war taking place under capitalism: the grab for raw resources, control of strategic points of influence, and the protection of trade routes. The conflict on the Pakistan and Afghanistan border is a combination of all three. The reasons are economic, inasmuch as they reflect the interests of the US and Western companies who will construct the oil and gas lines and are doing so for profit; there is the need of the West for energy; and there is anticipation of the wealth which will flow into the coffers of the ruling class in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The reasons are also political. The US and the West need compliant rulers in Kabul and Islamabad. The oil and gas routes need protection, and to have the threat posed from Al Qaida and the Taliban removed. Economics and politics inform each other. Commodity production and exchange for profit takes place through private ownership of the means of production protected by the capitalist state. Capitalist governments act as the executive of the capitalist class. Foreign policy taken on behalf of the capitalist class is often violent, underhand and squalid.

Oil, and not al Qaida and the Taliban, is threatening US capitalism's power and global leadership. In the scheme of things, individual terrorist groups do not amount to much compared with the geo-political interests of Iran, Russia and China. President Obama has taken over the presidency of a country whose global economic leadership is threatened by dwindling oil reserves and a struggle with other nation states, notably China, over whatever remains.

Oil is running out, fast. And the remaining oil, including new reserves, lies in regions close to Russia, China, Europe and other powers. America's global supremacy rests on an economic system based on easy access to oil. If someone else gets that oil, America loses.

Bush's eight years as President saw the biggest expansion of American military bases across the world. They were not set up to deal with terrorists and their feudal religion, but to look after the US interests in relation to raw resources and trade routes.

The strategic importance of the region was recently highlighted by the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank. In a report, THE PROPOSED IRAN-PAKISTAN-INDIA GAS PIPELINE: AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK TO REGIONAL SECURITY by A Cohen, L. Curtis and O. Graham (30 May 2008), the authors noted that:

Russia is determined to maintain its supplier dominance over European gas markets and is seeking to open up investment opportunities for Russian oil and gas companies, most of which are state-owned and flush with cash. It is also seeking to influence Iran to send its gas east through the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline (IPI) instead of West through the proposed Nabucco gas pipeline, which would compete with Gazprom.

The authors continued:

China has expressed an interest in extending the IPI pipeline into China to obtain additional gas to feed its growing economy. China views Iran as a critical source of oil and gas and as an important node in its strategy to develop more overland energy transport routes to reduce its dependence on U.S.-dominated sea-lanes. Like Russia, China and Iran are interested in blunting U.S. influence in the region. However, as an oil importer, China shares with the U.S. an interest in stable and lower energy prices.

Much of US foreign policy relating to raw resources and energy is directed against Moscow's strategy, to block all southern or western pipeline export routes that are not under Russian control, to keep Central Asian gas flowing north through the Russian network, and drive away any competition. In their report, the Heritage Foundation highlighted the use of the old Soviet oil and gas infrastructure that was created specifically to integrate Central Asia and Eastern Europe with Russia. The Russian government is seeking to expand this network through its proposed north-south energy corridor. So much for 'the end of the Cold War'.

This trade corridor is part of the Kremlin's plan to make Russia the primary hub in a vast pipeline network, that would take in Europe to the west and Iran, Central Asia and India to the south. And it is this attempt at monopolising

strategic trade routes which sees the US and its allies desperately struggling to create new energy supply corridors from Afghanistan through to Pakistan and India, to ensure that they get the energy they require. And in doing so it has created a 'crucible of terror', which is spreading out throughout the region to engulf the whole continent of Asia and beyond. The 'crucible of terror' and its consequences can only be prevented by the replacement of world capitalism with world Socialism.

Socialism is the only system within which the problems which now face the workers can be solved. Socialism will not have any artificial national boundaries; when the world's resources are owned in common under democratic control, there will be no state terrorism or individual terrorist acts. Production in Socialism will take place by free voluntary labour, solely to meet human need. There will be no coercive machinery of government protecting trade routes, raw materials and strategic spheres of influence.

Capitalism is a 'crucible of terror', and will remain so until the working class take conscious political action to establish Socialism.

THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into eternal truths and justice, but changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought not in the philosophy but in the economics of each particular epoch.

... The new productive forces have already outgrown the capitalistic mode of using them. And this conflict between productive forces and modes of production is not a conflict engendered in the minds of men, like that between original sin and divine justice. It exists, in fact, objectively, outside us, independently of the will and actions even of men who have brought it on. Modern Socialism is nothing but the reflex, in thought, of this conflict; its ideal reflection in the minds, first of the class directly suffering under it, the working class.

Engels, SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC, Essential Thinkers, 2004, p 425

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Capitalist Miscellany

There is a world of difference between complaining about how the system is run, and demanding the complete abolition of the system and its replacement with a much better one. It is one thing to be in favour of honest behaviour in a society built upon plunder and exploitation, and quite another to see that society will always enrich a minority of parasites while the means of production remain the property of the few.

Socialists have no advice to offer as how to run capitalism better or stop the corrupt fiddlers from fiddling. The working class account for about ninety per cent of society, but while they accept the leaders and led syndrome, the profit motive and the market economy, things worldwide will stay much as they are - capitalism can work in no other way, it cannot be humanised, de-militarised or made to become egalitarian. Looking for good, honest leaders is the pre-occupation of political idiots: this is not where the problem is located. Compared to what the capitalist class accumulate from their ownership of the means of production and their exploitation of wage-labour, the expenses claims of Members of Parliament, including the fiddlers, are beer money - small change.

It is this foundation of society that workers need to direct their attention to. The television and the mass press make a huge fuss about over-the-top expense claims. Try getting them to expose the accumulation of millions of pounds from the entirely legal ownership of the means whereby we live.

Britain's richest 2,000 individuals are worth £30 million or more each. The richest 1,000 have £55 million each (SUNDAY TIMES RICH LIST, 2009). Meanwhile, six mortgage lenders took part in a government scheme to help the unemployed keep their homes (TELETEXT, 21 April 2009). Alistair Darling, after twelve years of Labour running capitalism, in his Budget Speech could only warn of serious economic turmoil for decades to come. Government borrowing for the current year is set at £175 billion; the forecast for 2012/13 is nearly £700 billion, up by £240 billion from what he had predicted in November.

Unemployment jumped by 177,000 in the three months to February and has risen since, with London feeling the crunch. As the UK economy slid deeper into depression with a 1.95% decline in the first quarter on top of the 1.65% fall in the last three months of 2008, the Office of National Statistics reported that for the first time two successive quarters have contracted since records began in 1948, and the largest decrease quarter-on-quarter since 1979. No wonder the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Trades reported a fall of 51.3% in car sales, compared to March 2008.

How tragic that in the midst of all the world-wide misery, poverty and suffering under capitalism, that the marching-protest fraternity can be side-tracked into demanding "*honest*" politicians who do not fiddle their expenses.

Late in April, Gordon Brown visited Afghanistan. In his usual style of '*instant*' solutions that do nothing, he announced "*new plans*" for dealing with terrorism in Pakistan's border areas. Whether that meant the terrorism of the Americans bombing villages and killing women and children, or that of the Taliban, was not made clear. He did not elaborate on the fact that terrorism, wars and militarism are inseparable from the way the major powers of capitalism plunder the earth's resources, to accumulate wealth in the hands of a parasite minority.

After six years of 'liberation' car-bombs are still a frequent occurrence in Iraq: fifteen people were killed and forty more wounded in Baghdad on 6 May 2009. More ominously, tension continues between NATO and Russia over the issue of Georgia, a former part of the Soviet Union now being proposed for EU and NATO membership, but what Brown's instant answer to all this will be has yet to be disclosed. We do know that, on the day he went to Afghanistan (27 April 2009), it was announced that housing mortgage lending had fallen back again, described as a "" to recovery at 25% lower than a year ago, down 6.8% in March from the February level. Were we expected to be relieved by the announcement the same day that the Labour Government is to order the building of two new prisons, each with 1500 places?

Gordon Brown has not been slow to blame bad economic news - including rising unemployment - on the world down-turn. The Japanese workers will no doubt be fed the same excuses. The Japanese Government (Cabinet Office) said that their economy will shrink by 3.3% this fiscal year, the worst decline since 1945:

The world economic crisis and downturn is increasing in severity, and Japan's export market is rapidly shrinking (BBC CEEFAX, 27 April 2009).

The post-war Labour Government (that's going back 65 years) told workers that, come the end of its term, there would be no housing problem. The Socialist Party of Great Britain argued that housing problems are part of the wider issue of class poverty, and would remain so for as long as wage-labour remains. In early May of this year, as hundreds of thousands were falling behind in rental payments due to rising unemployment, the National Landlords Association reported dealing with 20,000 calls about rent arrears. Does anyone seriously expect child poverty to be abolished under capitalism?

Labour ministers are having to face the fact of no change between 2006 and 2009, despite their promises, and now admit that "*it's very difficult*"! Running capitalism in the interests of the capitalist class is bound to be.

Finally, with the news that the UK minimum wage is to rise by 7p to £5.80 per hour, from October. All fiddling ministers and MPs will have something to look forward to. As the system of built-in waste and destruction proposes the introduction of 'smart' gas and electricity meters, costing £7 billion, it's time long over-due for the piecemeal campaigners against the effects of capitalism to think about gas and electricity being supplied freely - because people need to use them. Once the do-gooders and all other opponents of Socialism grasp that, the logic of a world of

common ownership and production solely for use – no money - no wages – no markets – becomes irresistible.

MEA CULPA

An economics crisis is capitalism behaving normally in conformity with its own economic laws. Yet reading the newspapers it appears that crises should not occur, and when they do they are the fault of politicians, bankers, greedy speculators, or the idiocy of consumers taking out too much credit. Brown is told by the Tories and the media to apologise. Leading bankers wearing sack-cloth and ashes flagellate themselves in front of a House of Commons Committee, while a retired banker has his house vandalised, as anarchists demonstrate in the City against G20 leaders who are desperately trying to give the impression that they can end the depression.

Now it is the turn of economists to apologise. Andrew Oswald, Warwick University's Professor of Economics, wrote (Evening Standard, 8 April 2009):

"We have all learned a little humility. A few years ago, I argued that a large housing crisis was likely, but I did not correctly pick its timing. As economists we have to accept part of the responsibility for what has happened. It is the job of experts to prevent crises in the domains in which they are meant to be expert. In this sense, economists have let down the country."

That apology is not worth the paper it is written on. Professors of economics, let alone politicians, cannot do anything about economic crises and subsequent trade depressions. These are a fact of life under capitalism. Economists do not understand capitalism sufficiently for them to be able to give an account of why crises occur.

Professor Oswald could do worse than to introduce his students to Marx who did have something sensible to say about economic crises. Crises are the result of the anarchy of commodity production and exchange for profit. Marx went on to show that social wealth is created by class exploitation, and that capitalism can never be made to work in the interest of all society. And capitalism's failure to meet the needs of all society is particularly reflected in periods of high level unemployment, social pain and discomfort.

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Crises and Depressions: Capitalism Behaving Normally

Ed Balls, the Secretary of State for Education, stated that this is the worst economic crisis for a century (INDEPENDENT, 10 February 2009). Articles appear in the media and lengthy discussions take place on the television and radio asking what went wrong and who is to blame. Penitent bankers are forced to grovel in front of Parliamentary committees. What lesson are we to make of this?

The German philosopher, Hegel, once said that the only lesson is "*that people and governments never have learnt anything from history*" (INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY). This is not altogether true, but it can be applied to the attitude of capitalists, politicians and economists to the recurrent crises and depressions of capitalism. In spite of a score or more of depressions in the past 200 years, the capitalists (and most workers) believe, when each boom comes, that it will last for ever.

As Marx put it, when the market is expanding, each capitalist behaves as if the demand for his products is limitless. For a time this appears to be true; there is a growing demand for raw materials and finished products, and for workers. Profit prospects are good, unemployment falls, and wages rise. But, as Marx also said, this situation is the "*harbinger of a coming crisis*". Suddenly some industries find that they have overproduced for their particular market, and start to halt further investment and curb output.

Capitalism does not go on producing if there is no profit in it. At that point there will be, side by side, some

companies cutting back because of falling orders, and other companies still reporting an inability to meet their orders because of scarcity of materials and workers. Then they all become more or less involved in the depression as unemployment grows and demand falls generally.

When the inevitable depression takes place, politicians and economic ‘experts’ say that something has gone wrong, and what they have to do is discover what this something is, why it has happened, and how to avoid it next time. Dozens of ‘remedies’ have been published: put wages up or put them down; raise prices or reduce them; go for free trade or import restrictions; increase government expenditure or decrease it; stay in the EU or leave it; induce the banks to lend more freely or the reverse; increase government borrowing or avoid it; increase taxation or reduce it; raise the foreign exchange rate or lower it; tighten up trade union law or relax it; have more nationalisation or less nationalisation.

One point ignored by all these pedlars of remedies is that these have all been tried before - and have failed.

Take the Thatcher government, with their monetarist policies in the 1980s. They said that all would be well if government expenditure, borrowing and taxation were reduced; inflation got rid of; wages and prices left to market forces; if there was less nationalisation; and tighter laws governing trade unions and strikes. But all these supposed cures for depression existed in the last quarter of the 19th century. Government expenditure and taxation, in relation to the National Income, were only about a fifth of what they are now. There was no inflation. Wages and prices were then left to market forces and, not only were the unions numerically much weaker, but they operated under more stringent trade union law. There was much less nationalisation. For most of the time, Tory governments were in office.

So what happened? That was the period of the Great Depression, which lasted over twenty years. In the middle of the Great Depression, in 1884, the Tory leader, Lord Randolph Churchill, had this to say:

We are suffering from a depression of trade extending as far back as 1874, ten years of trade depression, and the most hopeful either among our capitalists or among our artisans can discern no sign of revival.

He listed all the industries that were, in his words, dead or dying – coal, iron, ship-building, silk, wool, and cotton. He ended: “*Turn your eyes where you like, you will find signs of mortal disease*”.

This country had not at that time experienced capitalism run by Labour governments, whose record is in fact no better than the Tories or Liberals. In the fifty years from 1929 to 1979 there were four periods of Labour government, in all of which priority was given to reducing unemployment and keeping it low (actually Labour said they could abolish it entirely). In all of these four periods, unemployment was higher when they left office than when they went in. The last period was 1974-79, which saw unemployment rise from 629,000 to just under 1,400,000.

The favourite remedy of the capitalist Left for high unemployment was to increase government expenditure. In 1973, unemployment was 630,000 and government expenditure £24,000 million. The latter figure has increased every year since 1973, including the Thatcher and Major governments. With the Labour government in 2008 under Gordon Brown, it was £519,229 million, but unemployment, though still much below the levels of the 1930s, was just under 2 million (OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS on-line, January 2009). Now it is over 2 million and rising.

In the 1980s, one question on which the Labour Party, the Tory Party and the economists were all agreed was that one cause of depression and heavy unemployment is that prices were too high, especially in the housing market.

In a similar situation of depression and heavy unemployment in 1931, a government committee (the Committee on Finance and Industry) took exactly the opposite line. The fourteen top bankers, economists and Tory, Labour and Liberal politicians studied the problem for eighteen months, and issued their report in June 1931. Among their recommendations was a chapter on “*The immediate necessity to raise prices above the present level*”.

Both views are baseless: capitalism has periodic depressions whether prices are high or low, rising or falling.

The belief of the searchers for remedies is based on a misconception. They believe that trade depression and heavy

unemployment prove that something has gone wrong. They are mistaken. Nothing whatever has “*gone wrong*” with capitalism: it is just the way the system operates in accordance with its structure, with alternate expansion and contraction: much like the tides at the seaside, if in the evening the sea is almost up to the road level and then in the morning it has dropped twenty feet, you don’t shout: “*something has gone wrong - what shall we do about it?*”

Where the analogy with the tides fails is in respect of regularity and the length of the trade depressions. It is not possible to count on all depressions lasting for some specified time. Some are quite short, others very long, like the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The Russian economist, Nikolai Kondratiev, was responsible for the theory of a 60-year cycle of deep depressions, which is naturally difficult to prove. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has never accepted it, and the theory belongs with those curious economic theories of crises which have more to do with astrology than actually understanding capitalism.

Some economists have followed Kondratiev’s erroneous “*long-wave*” speculative theory. The late Professor J Schumpeter was one. He tried to create a ‘business cycle’ theory, as a rival to Marx’s study of capitalist development and the economic cause of crises as arising out of the anarchy of commodity production and exchange for profit.

Lord Rees-Mogg, a follower of Schumpeter, in his THE GREAT RECKONING (1990) and periodically in his columns in the TIMES, has long warned of a long depression as an argument for a return to the gold standard. Rees-Mogg also believes that the Kondratiev waves lead to revolution:

The Kondratievs are the big economic crises that occur perhaps twice a century. They are more intense and last longer than ordinary recessions. They cause serious unemployment. They also cause revolutions.

THE MAIL ON SUNDAY, 29 December 2008

A study of all the economic depressions since the Socialist Party of Great Britain was founded in 1904 shows no great increase in the number of workers becoming Socialists. On the contrary - during the 1930s in Britain, most workers supported the main capitalist parties with a minority supporting either Mosley’s Fascist Blackshirts or Stalin’s Russia.

In any event, the case for Socialism exists continually, no matter where capitalism happens to be in the trade cycle. In the current depression, there are 29 million workers in Britain, of whom two million are unemployed. Most workers are in employment. Those in employment are still being exploited and producing surplus value: that is a profit for the capitalists.

The case against capitalism is not that it causes crises and unemployment, but that it is a system of class exploitation based upon the private ownership of the means of production to the exclusion of the majority in society. What will generate a socialist revolution will be the class-conscious political action of a Socialist majority.

As for predictions, economists and particularly journalists are spectacularly ill-equipped to tell what the economy is going to do. An analysis by the American economist Dr Victor Zarnowitz of forecasts between 1970 and 1974 found that, of 48 predictions made by economists, 46 missed the turning points in the economy. Six years later, the economic journalist William Sheriden wrote,

... the big three economic forecasting firms failed to predict the severity of the 1980 recession, the worst since the Great Depression, and missed the drop in real GNP for the second quarter of 1980 by 27 per cent.

GUARDIAN, 6 May 2002

No economist has predicted with a scientific methodology the current crisis and depression, its length and consequences. In the US, the boast by many leading economists was that the ‘business cycle’ had been resolved, and capitalism would give stable and constant growth. All that can be said is that, at some stage in the present depression, as in all earlier ones, expansion will be resumed when capitalists, viewing all the relevant factors (prices, interest rates, wages), decide that it will be profitable to invest again in the development of new industries and the re-expansion of old ones. As Marx noted (WAGES, PRICE AND PROFIT in SW1, p 440):

capitalist production moves through certain periodical cycles. It moves through a state of quiescence, growing animation, prosperity, overtrade, crisis and stagnation.

For the working class, the lesson is clear. Capitalism can never work in their interests: in favourable trade conditions they are exploited just as those who remain in employment are during a depression. For the unemployed, there is pain, hardship, and the humiliation of the dole.

It does not have to be this way. Socialism, the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society, will end both class exploitation and unemployment. Free voluntary labour will produce just to meet people's needs.

FREETHINKING? STUFF IT, SAY SOCIALISTS

Whilst it is true that all socialists are atheists, it is equally true to say that not all atheists are socialists. A case in point, which amply demonstrates this, can be found in the strange utterances of Terry Sanderson, the President of the National Secular Society at a London rally for ONE LAW FOR ALL in March 2009.

Whilst attacking the policy of accommodation and appeasement of political Islam, he let slip that there can be no common bond between Socialists and freethinkers. Sanderson noted that: “*we do not need another legal system running in parallel... sharia is creeping into our legal system and society...*”.

At which, the Socialist sits up and cries: “***our** society ...**our** legal system?*”

Here Mr Sanderson betrays, to our dismay, the total failure of the humanist movement and their ignorance of the nature of the capitalist society which is run, and its laws framed, in the interests of a minority.

A society free from religion will not end the ills that capitalism saddles the working class with. Only once we have moved from capitalism to Socialism can we ever live in a society that we can call our own.

Because of this we are totally opposed to so-called “*freethinkers*”, as we are to all political parties that work within the framework of capitalism.

ERRATUM

In the article A QUESTION OF CLASS (SS 71, p 5), a quotation was given from THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO stating this was the opening statement, when in fact it was actually located later on in the text.

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Mr Brown's Cunning Plan

Mr Brown has announced a national plan. It was to be a secret plan, and not to be released until after the local and European elections. It was to be a road-map out of the economic depression into a land of milk and honey. Like a schoolboy in a playground, one of Brown's aides boasted that “*Gordon has a plan. David Cameron does not*” (INDEPENDENT, 23 November 2008).

Who wants to be in Brown's gang? Not many. A whiff of death hangs over his administration. Staff at No 10 must by now all be writing their CVs, in between ducking their heads from flying mobile phones and anything else Brown throws around the office in one of his spiteful tantrums.

Of course, another Brown once had a ‘plan’. That was George Brown. He set up the Department of Economic Affairs, and in 1965 published Labour's National Plan. Like Gorgeous George, the National Plan fell flat on its face

never to get off the ground again.

Gordon's plan - is it supposed to last five minutes or five years? - has all the hallmarks of one of Private Baldrick's desperate, futile and often nonsensical "*cunning plans*" in the TV sitcom BLACKADDER. In the last programme of the series, Baldrick was trying to escape the death and destruction of the trenches of the First World War.

Baldrick's "cunning plan" goes like this:

Baldrick: *I have a plan!*

Blackadder: *Really! A cunning and subtle one?*

Baldrick: *Yes.*

Blackadder: *As cunning as a fox who's just been appointed Professor of Cunning at Oxford University?*

When they all go 'over the top' from the Great War's trenches, Blackadder's reply is "*well, it'll have to wait*". The next second they all get killed, and Baldrick's "*cunning plan*" lay dead in Flanders Field.

Gordon Brown's economic plan lies strewn all across the pigsty that is Westminster, with its trough of swill, greedy snouts, and avarice beyond imagination.

The reality is that capitalism cannot be planned. Governments have no control either over economic depressions or levels of unemployment. And, like markets, governments fail. Including Prime Ministers. And defenders of capitalism say this is the best of all possible worlds.

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Marx and Popular Press Gibberish

On the 30 March 2009, two articles purporting to be about Marx - under the heading WAS MARX RIGHT ALL ALONG? - appeared in the EVENING STANDARD. Our reply deals with the second of the two articles (No - The Class System has Fallen Apart) by Emma Duncan, deputy editor of THE ECONOMIST.

Emma Duncan may not be the most muddle-headed and superficial would-be critic of Marx, but she is a contender for that unenviable title. She starts by noting that various leaders with a responsibility for running capitalism, including Nicolas Sarkozy and the Pope, have found it useful to pretend some acquaintance with the works of Marx. A Chinese company we are told "*is planning Marx the Musical*".

It has all been done before. For more than seventy years, Lenin, Stalin and their Bolshevik mind-benders popularised the lie that Soviet state-capitalism was Socialism, and that Communism - the next stage - would come some time in the distant future. The reality was the most brutal police-state dictatorship the world has ever seen. Marx was interpreted to mean Leninism, while the classless, stateless world advocated by Marx - with the wages system abolished - was left to the Socialist Party of Great Britain to advocate, frequently with violent opposition from supporters of Lenin and Stalin's Russia.

Duncan goes on to wonder if the crises of capitalism will create the conditions for workers' revolution and, as men discuss, "... *their wives look at their watches and wonder whether the babysitter is going to withdraw her labour*". This seeming light-heartedness reveals her fundamental ignorance of Marx's teaching. Marx distinguished between 'labour' and 'labour-power'. What the employing class buys is the workers' physical and mental energies contained in their person, that is, their 'labour power' or working ability. As workers work, they expend that labour power in what they do or produce. Their labour is contained in the finished products. Those products belong to their employers, the owners of the means of production (see MARX'S WAGE LABOUR AND CAPITAL, VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT and THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

Duncan makes the comment that Marx "... *is fashionable in a way that he hasn't been since the 1930s when the news*

of the horrible reality of the regime began to seep out of the Soviet Union". We have dealt with Soviet state capitalism above but her ignorance is shown by her belief that the "horrible reality" was engendered by the ideas of Marx. She produces no evidence for this: for a very good reason, there is none. It was distortions of Marx that were fashionable in the 1930s.

Duncan can have no excuse for not knowing that Lenin and Stalin's distortions of Marx were "seeping" out of Russia for more than a decade before 1930, which was to give their barbaric police-state an ideological basis for crushing the opposition. She should read what the Socialist Party of Great Britain was saying in articles in our monthly journal, a selection of these being reprinted in 1948 in an SPGB pamphlet, *Russia Since 1917*. For instance in May 1917, after the February revolution:

All the information available both past and present shows quite clearly that the upheaval in Russia is not a revolution of the working class, clearly seeing its slave position under the old order and setting to work in an organised fashion to emancipate itself. Far from this is the truth, we are sorry to say. It is but another example of the capitalists using the discontent and numbers of the working class in Russia to sweep away the Feudal rules and restrictions so strongly symbolised in the Czar and the Council of Nobles, and to establish a system of government in line with modern capitalist needs and notions.

RUSSIA SINCE 1917, pp 7-8

She may be able to show that economists other than Marx understood that crises are to be expected – not including those who told us that "*boom and bust are over*". But Marx did not see crises as the cause of ending capitalism. "*The self-conscious movement of the immense majority*" is necessary to end class society and this is by the use of political power (see THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

Somehow Duncan manages to drag in Hitler, and claims that he and Marx "*...had larger and more important things to say; and it is on their wider message that they should be judged*". Hitler built a one-party military dictatorship where idiots strutted about in jack-boots and wore swastika arm-bands, not unlike Stalin's regime in Russia with which Hitler had a pact of Peace and Friendship from 1939 to 1941. Both had firing-squads and concentration camps for anyone opposing them. Hitler called his ruthless dictatorship 'National Socialism', which is a contradiction in terms. Socialism can only be democratic and worldwide, and will have no need for leaders since majority awareness is a precondition. We should not expect the likes of Duncan to know that!

Emma Duncan could hold her own with anyone for making wild assertions completely lacking any evidence. A good example is:

Marx was interested in capitalism's crises because he thought they would eventually lead to revolution.

Also:

If he [Marx] was correct about capitalism's crises, the men with the stubble hope, then maybe his prediction that the whole system would fall apart will also be falsified.

Naturally we are not told where this "*prediction*" is to be found nor where Marx said that crises would eventually lead to revolution.

She raves on:

It won't [fall apart] because the world Marx was writing about looks nothing like ours. He thought the driving force in society was class conflict between the bourgeoisie – the rich, who own the factories – and the proletariat – the poor, who owned nothing but their labour. The proletariat would get fed up with the economic crises, seize the factories and establish a dictatorship. Class war would thus destroy capitalism.

Misrepresentation and false conclusions as always run close together, and as usual without any quotation. Regarding the conflict of interest between the bourgeoisie, owners of the means of production, and the proletariat who sell their labour power, Duncan would do well to go through THE SUNDAY TIMES RICH LIST. The top 10 percent still

own around 90 percent of social wealth.

Let us look at what Marx and Engels actually said about crises, and how society will be changed:

In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity – the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation has cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce.

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, p 18

Also:

And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones.

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, pp 18-19

Far from advocating a Soviet-style dictatorship, Marx and Engels wanted a classless society void of political power:

Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. As the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class. In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

For Emma Duncan not to have read this is unpardonable. A society without classes and with no wage-labour is a constant feature of Marx's work, and the purpose of his critical analysis of capitalism.

No such society has yet been established, and it certainly never existed in Russia.

In the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO we find : “...*that there can no longer be any wage-labour when there is no longer any capital*” (p 33). In the pamphlet, WAGE-LABOUR AND CAPITAL, in italics it states that:

... capital pre-supposes wage labour; wage labour pre-supposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; each reciprocally evoke each other (p 21).

And finally, in VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT, Marx argued, addressing the working class:

Instead of the conservative motto, “A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!” they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, “Abolition of the wages system!” (p 93)

Emma Duncan, please note: this is the revolutionary position, not centralised state power in a one-party dictatorship. The SPGB has advocated the end of the wages system and therefore of class society, ever since its formation in 1904. The slogan-shouting supporters of Lenin and Trotsky were our most vehement opponents.

We make no apology for quoting Marx at such length - it is necessary to set the record straight. We urge workers to read the works of Marx and Engels for themselves, and to join the Socialist Party of Great Britain in working to establish Socialism..

[All COMMUNIST MANIFESTO quotations are from the Whitehead Library edition.]

SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed proletarian class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific Socialism.

Engels, SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC, Essential Thinkers,. pp 451-2

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Obituary: Bob Barltrop

It was with much sadness that we learned that Bob Barltrop had died on 26 April 2009. His, on and off, membership of and association with the SPGB lasted more than 60 years. He joined originally in 1946 and left in 1960, then rejoined in 1969.

His association, if not unique, was certainly unusual. He regarded himself as a Socialist for some years before 1946, but at that stage, saw nothing incongruous about joining the Air Force during the war. Born in 1922, he was still only twenty-four when he joined the Party.

He became a Party writer and speaker in the early 1950s, and debated against a then prominent London anarchist. This writer attended that debate. Bob spoke first. I had resolved to judge the contributions dispassionately. Bob began by stating the anarchist case and followed with a statement of the Socialist position. Each speaker opened for half-an-hour. When Bob had finished, I knew the anarchist could have nothing to say: he spent half-an-hour doing just that. On the way out, I remember saying quite triumphantly to another anarchist: “*What did you think of that?*” To which he made the typical reply: “*He was not speaking for me*”!

There is much irony in all of this. When Barltrop left the SPGB in 1960, he supported the anarchists and contributed to their publication. It had been due to criticism of his writing that he had left the Party. With hindsight it might be said that, had there been person-to-person chat, things might have worked out, but as it happened the criticism was made across the EC table. It happened that Hackney Branch to which Bob belonged was in a state of turmoil and, when a group of members left (they came to be called “*the Hackney thirteen*”), Bob went with them.

What is of particular interest to us is that Barltrop wrote a history of the Party called THE MONUMENT. He started to write this whilst outside the Party but completed it in 1975, after rejoining when it was published. It runs for two hundred pages and has an excellent picture of Harry Young on the front cover. Comrade Young is mentioned together with Hardy and Cyril May in the infamous statement of their expulsion from the Clapham-based ‘Socialist Party’, where it stated that:

... [they] and other members [of the group of expelled members who went on to found the reconstituted SPGB] contained some of the Party’s staunchest and most able writers, speakers and activists from earlier periods, in some cases as early as the inter-war years.

The Socialist Party, SOCIALIST STANDARD, June 2004, p 41

THE MONUMENT was well received, not least by some members of our audience in Hyde Park, who thought they had found something to use against the Party but without success. Thirty-four years on, THE MONUMENT is not easy to obtain, but is worth the effort since Bob Barltrop brought together a mass of detailed information about the SPGB and its members.

The back cover says:

It is about a group of people who emerged from the nineteenth century declaring hostility to the official Labour

movement and all reforms. They were self-educated working men and their watch-word was 'no-compromise'. They stood almost alone against the 1914-18 war, and foretold the state capitalist outcome of the Russian Revolution.

Bob retained his affection for the SPGB to the end. He resigned from the Clapham-based Party in 1983, and supported the expelled members who formed the Reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1991. He subscribed to SOCIALIST STUDIES from its first issue, attended our Summer School lectures, and maintained correspondence with Comrades Jim D'Arcy and Cyril May, until their deaths in February 2001 and September 2003 respectively.

Bob Barltrop's intimate knowledge of the party and its members extended beyond the years covered by THE MONUMENT. The loss of that knowledge is irreplaceable. With each such Socialist who dies, significant knowledge is lost. This is true of Hardy, Young, May, D'Arcy, and many others of their generation.

Bob left a widow and three sons to whom we express our condolence.

PRINCIPLES FIRST

The 'Impossibilists' had become a party. The Inaugural Meeting adopted the Object and Declaration of Principles that the Provisional Committee had drawn up, and voted for the organization's name. There were three other suggestions: the Social Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party of Great Britain, and, proposed by a young Irishman who was to become Father of the House of Commons and finally Lord McEntee of Walthamstow, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and Ireland.

The party's Object was to be: *'The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of the whole community.'* ... Correctness of definition and theory was all-important: in the minds of the men of the new party, the failures of the existing organizations were simply the fruits of false theories.

Robert Barltrop, THE MONUMENT:

The Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain,
Pluto Press, 1975, p 9

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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email: enquiries@socialiststudies.org.uk | www.socialiststudies.org.uk